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Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church.

156 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y.

The Asheville Farm School.

The elevation of any class or community could never be accomplished if only the girls were educated and the boys left to grow up in ignorance and illiteracy.

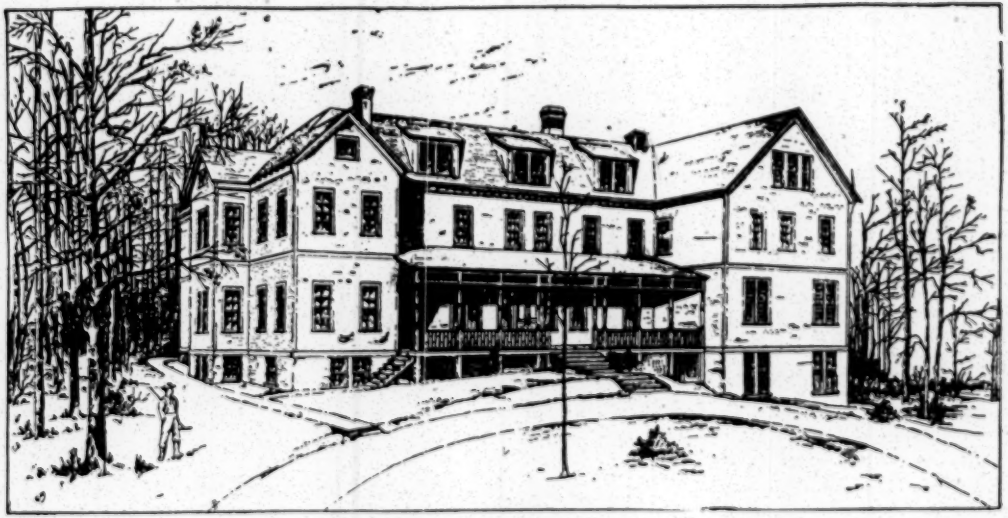
The Asheville Industrial and Normal Schools, established for the instruction of the Mountain People of that section, had been so successful in the training and development of the girls that their parents and friends, together with the girls themselves, recognizing the value of such institutions, began to urge that advantages of a similar character be provided for the boys. The teachers of the Asheville schools had long realized that their work would be, in a great measure, lost if the boys were not educated too, and the opportunity given them to become trained workmen, trained in such a manner that a spirit of enterprise would be developed and the true manliness of their natures aroused. Of these boys, Miss Stephenson wrote: "They are bright in intellect and strong

in character, and the darkest fields of the church are suffering for just such body, brain, and spirit-power as is lying latent in this Scotch-Irish youth of the mountains." This strong feeling on the part of our faithful teachers, who knew the situation and felt the danger of longer delay in making provision for the education of the boys, aroused others to action, and the Asheville Farm School, with its present buildings and equipment, is the outgrowth of conviction and effort. It is an institution established to the end that those who come under its fostering care may go forth with such industrial habits that they will become bread-winners, with such a knowledge of the needs of others that they will become true helpers, and above all with that knowledge of God's Word which will not only equip them for the battle of life but will enable them, as opportunity may be given, to spread the glad tidings of a Saviour's love.

The first contribution towards this object was made in June, 1891, when Miss Stephenson addressed the Sunday school at New Rochelle, New York. At the close of the session a boy of twelve years went to her and said: "To whom shall I send the money for that school? I have only two or three dollars, but I want to help start that school." On Thanksgiving Day, of the same year, a missionary collection was taken at the Asheville Industrial School, amounting to six dollars and ten cents, the girls voting unanimously that it should be given towards the boys'

school, one little child saying to her teacher, "We's so glad we gave our five centses to help make a school for our brother." Those encouraging and touching beginnings led to larger benefactions, and in time a purchase was made of a farm of four hundred and twenty acres, meadow, upland and forest, lying along the banks of the beautiful Swannanoa river, and situated about seven miles from Asheville; this site having been wisely selected, that the produce of the farm might help support the girls' school, and any surplus find a ready market in Asheville.

As soon as the money was in hand the school building (see cut) was erected, the work being carried forward as rapidly as possible and in November of 1894, in the partially completed building the school was opened. Six months before the building could be occupied one hundred and twenty had made application for entrance. Mr. Samuel Jeffrey, a graduate of the Agricultural Department of Cornell University, and present Superintendent of the school, wrote that letters were received constantly from widows pleading for their sons, and mothers deserted by their husbands, begging that a home might be given to their boys, that they might be brought up and educated in a right way. Especially were there appeals from brothers of the girls in Asheville schools. As one boy said, "I 'low we-uns be ez much caount ez the gells." At first thirty-six were taken, though by that time the number of applications had reached two hundred, but as the



ASHEVILLE FARM SCHOOL.

boys are generally too poor to pay anything, they *can only be taken as scholarships are provided for them.* As the school was opened almost at the beginning of winter, no farm work, except caring for the animals, was possible, but the severe weather provided occupation in the way of procuring fuel, as very little wood was on hand.

Of the first six months, Mr. Jeffrey wrote: "My faith was not strong enough to hope for much in the way of results, either in the school room or in the spiritual life of the boys; but in less than three months there was blessed fruit in both. I believe that four of our boys have been hopefully converted and others are thinking seriously. The outlook is very bright for the success and usefulness of the school." A Christian Endeavor Society was organized, an interest in Bible study was awakened, and the starved minds and bodies began to grow, physically, intellectually and spiritually.

During the summer vacation the teachers and twenty-four boys, who remained to help in the work, had very few idle moments. The upper story of the building was completed—furnishing in all, accommodations for one hundred boys—the work on the farm was carried on and a good share of the provisions for the winter harvested.

The second year of the school began in September, 1895,—seventy-six boys in attendance, and more expected. The breaking in of the new boys to the work, especially to the house work, was no easy task, but even this had its encouraging side,

for the difference between the old and new boys was so apparent that the teachers could realize how great a stride forward the old ones had taken. Another encouraging feature was the loyal support of the old ones, which did much in the promotion of good discipline and earnest work in the school. A little incident will show the spirit of the school: At one time one of the boys of the first year was, while apparently studying, really wasting his time playing. The teacher in a low tone said to him, "You ought not to do this way." "Why?" "Because you are one of the old boys." He looked at the teacher earnestly and then said, "That's so—excuse me, I won't forget again." Certainly such a spirit must rejoice the heart of any teacher—and just as certainly the training that produces such a spirit must commend itself to every one, showing plainly the wisdom and excellent judgment of our teachers who have these boys in charge.

All the work outside and in is done by the boys, everything being systematized; part are detailed for a specified time and work, and then changed, so that all are instructed in farming, gardening, caring for stock, helping in the kitchen, dormitories and dining-room, etc., etc.

In the school room, reading, writing, music, arithmetic, geography, American history, language lessons, physiology, and civil government are taught, and the progress of the pupils is remarkable, especially as one realizes that when they entered the school, as many as twenty-four could not read

a word and many had progressed no further than the Second Reader. They are not allowed to use tobacco in any form while in the school, and as most of them have been taught to use it from childhood, it is a hard struggle to rid themselves of the habit.

Many of the boys of this section feel the need of an education and long for it, while in many others a desire for knowledge must be created, and constant watching must be maintained, otherwise the old habits of quarreling and fighting will assert themselves, and the evils of the former idle life be productive of harm to themselves and others.

Some of them are brave little fellows who endure much, going all winter long without shoes in this cold mountain country. Miss Stephenson says: "I am reminded of a day-school teacher once writing me concerning a little boy whose bare foot and ankle were burnt by splashes from a kettle of boiling pitch. He made no outcry. Some one exclaimed: 'Now, what will you do? The skin is all burnt off your foot.' The boy said quietly, 'Hesh, what yer makin' sich a fuss fur, ez good 'll grow on. I hain't no baby.'"

The conditions of the home life of these mountain boys—if such an existence may be termed home life—are so well known that it is unnecessary to enter into a lengthy description of the idle, useless, depraved, ignorant, unfilled lives, which will certainly be theirs unless Christian people come to the rescue, and God will certainly hold the Christian Church responsible, if these, our

countrymen, living at our very doors, are left, because of our "lack of service," to grow in wickedness, becoming a destroyer of themselves, and a menace to the life of the Nation.

This "Farm School" must be heartily and *continuously* supported, for it is but the beginning of larger operations on behalf of this too long neglected people.

When once societies, and individuals, have made themselves familiar with the needs of the boys, and the advantages offered, there will undoubtedly be no lack of scholarships provided, the silver and the gold will flow into the Lord's treasury, for no work in the Mission field can appeal more strongly to our patriotism, to that innate love of Country which sees her highest welfare in being a "land for Christ," than that which centers in the institutions devoted to the training of those who in time may not only hold the power of the ballot but may become the law makers of our land.

Too great effort, therefore, cannot be put forth to bring the boys of the mountains of the South under the influence and wise guidance of our mission teachers, that they may not only be rescued from the evils of an idle, thoughtless, unfilled life, but that they may become a positive power for rebuking evil, and as good, loyal Christian citizens may promote that righteousness which "exalteth a Nation."